



NATIONAL LINK COALITION

Working together to stop violence against people and animals

The LINK-Letter Vol. 11, No. 2 February 2018

A monthly report of news from THE NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER



ON THE LINK BETWEEN ANIMAL ABUSE AND HUMAN VIOLENCE



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THE LINK AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Hawai'i Bill Cites Link in Effort to Ban Animal Sexual Abuse

Citing Link evidence, Hawai'i would become the 46th state to ban animal sexual abuse under the terms of **SB2289**, one of the most comprehensive bills to ban bestiality introduced in recent years.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Karl Rhoads with three co-sponsors, notes that animal sexual abuse is not currently being addressed adequately under the state's anti-cruelty laws that require proof of specific actions such as torture or of such physical trauma as bodily injury or death of the animal. Animal sexual abuse, as described in the bill's preamble, may not result in distinct physical injury or evidence.



"The legislature further finds that animal sexual abuse is the single strongest predictor of increased risk for committing child sexual abuse," reads the bill's introduction, noting that animal sexual abuse has been added as one of four specific animal cruelty crimes now included in the FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System. "By establishing animal sexual abuse as a separate crime, law enforcement will be better able to identify potentially dangerous sexual predators in their community," the bill reads.

The bill also notes that animals, like children, may be trafficked, sold and traded for sex and frequently used in the pornography industry. Trafficking animals for sex is currently not prohibited in Hawai'i.

The bill would create a new crime of sexual assault of an animal to include: subjecting an animal to sexual contact; possessing, selling, transferring, purchasing, or obtaining an animal with the intent of subjecting it to sexual contact; organizing, promoting, conducting, or participating in acts of animal sexual contact; causing, coercing or abetting another person in animal sexual assault; or permitting such acts on his premises. Normal veterinary, animal husbandry and conformation judging practices would be exempted.

Offenses would be a Class C felony, or a Class B felony if committed in the presence of a minor. Upon conviction, the offender would be required to forfeit the animal involved as well as any other animals to

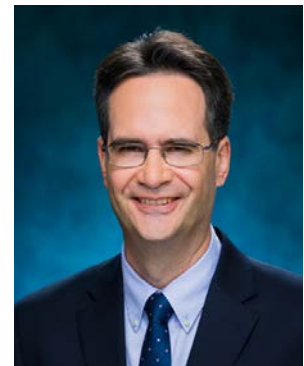
a humane society, and be prohibited from owning any animals or residing, working or volunteering in any place where animals are present for at least five years. The court would also require the offender to undergo appropriate psychological or psychiatric treatment or counseling and make financial restitution to the animal's owner.

The bill is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Link Cited as Rationale for Animal Abuser Registry

While numerous states have attempted in recent years to enact laws establishing state registries of convicted animal abusers, a bill introduced in the Hawai'i state legislature may be the first such bill to specifically base the need for such a law upon evidence that acts of cruelty to an animal have been linked to cruelty to other animals and to violence against humans.

"The legislature finds that violence, whether against humans or animals, must not be tolerated in our society. To the extent that acts of cruelty to one animal has been linked to cruelty to other animals and violence against



humans, it is necessary to ensure that persons convicted of cruelty to animals are restricted from interacting with animals," reads the measure's introduction.

Hawai'i State Sens. Lorraine Inouye, Donovan Dela Cruz, & Karl Rhoads

SB 2014, introduced on Jan. 17 by Sens. Lorraine Inouye, Donovan Dela Cruz and Karl Rhoads with five co-sponsors, would impose restrictions prohibiting offenders from further interactions with animals. It would create a state registry of animal abusers that would prevent such persons from adopting, purchasing or working closely with animals. The registry would be established by the Attorney General.

The bill would also require animal shelters, pet stores, animal breeders, zoos, and aquariums to check and see if prospective customers, adopters or employees have been convicted of cruelty. It would also require police officers to receive training on identifying and investigating animal abuse.

The bill is in the Senate Judiciary and Ways & Means Committees.



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Please tell us what organization(s) you're with
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ANIMAL ABUSE AND... DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Australian Animal Welfare Plan Deletes Domestic Violence Links

The government of the State of Victoria in Australia has published a groundbreaking Animal Welfare Action Plan based upon the principle that animals are sentient beings, but apparently bowed to pressure from agricultural interests to omit the Link between domestic violence and animal abuse that had been included in an earlier draft.

In the 2016 draft of the Action Plan aimed at updating laws that were more than 30 years old, the Ministry of Agriculture made several references to domestic violence that surprised and disappointed farmers. The 15-page document referred to “understanding the impact of domestic violence on animals” as a priority animal welfare issue and called for “opportunities to provide assistance with caring for animals in domestic violence situations.”



Leonard Vallance

However, Victorian Farmers Federation Livestock Group President Leonard Vallance told [The Weekly Times](#), “Domestic violence is a human condition; it shouldn’t be in there. It’s a social issue.” Vallance, who described fears within the farming community over animal rights activists whose agenda is to close the farm sector, at least conceded, “While animal abuse may happen as a part of domestic violence, it is not the cause of it, and should be treated differently.”

A Royal Commission into Family Violence had found that animals were being abused in homes experiencing family violence, noting that abuse or threats of abuse against pets may be used by perpetrators to control family members, particularly children. Accordingly, the 2016 draft included calls to better provide assistance with caring for animals in family violence situations that supported both animals and their owners.

The 2018 Plan, rolled out with considerable fanfare, lists what will be done to improve animal welfare across a broad range of species and activities, which agencies will be involved, and time frames for completion. The Plan’s premise is “that animals are sentient – they experience feelings and emotions such as pleasure, comfort, fear and pain. This means that animal welfare matters. All animals deserve to be treated with care and respect.”

However, the influence of the agribusiness sector is apparent in the description of the goal for the plan. “The aim is to protect Victoria's reputation as a humane and responsible agricultural producer, to promote market access and maintain consumer confidence in the state's livestock industries,” according to the [Agriculture Victoria](#) website.

The 24-page document identifies four key areas for action to improve the welfare of animals: a policy and legal framework; collaboration that advances and promotes investment in animal welfare; education and communication that improves attitudes, knowledge, skills and compliance; and effective and efficient compliance and enforcement. However, nowhere in the Plan are domestic violence, child abuse or adult protective services agencies included among potential stakeholders for collaboration or educational efforts



Mississippi Sen. Angela Hill

Two States Considering Pets Protection Orders

Three bills introduced into the Mississippi and Rhode Island State Legislatures in January would add those states to the 32 other states that allow courts to include animals in domestic violence protection orders.

Mississippi SB 2232, sponsored by Sen. Angela Burks Hill (R-Pearl River), would authorize courts to include the protection of pets (but not livestock or wildlife) in the order and require that the respondent not remove, damage, hide, harm or dispose of any companion animal owned by the person protected by the order. The court could also authorize the removal of a companion animal from the possession of the respondent. If enacted, the law would take effect on July 1, 2018. The bill is in the senate Judiciary Committee.

Meanwhile, two bills in **Rhode Island** would address pets in domestic violence situations. **H7032** would permit the family court to award custody of household pets to the plaintiff in a domestic abuse complaint. "Household pets" are defined as domesticated or tamed animals kept for companionship or



Rhode Island Reps. Lombardi, Coughlin, Williams, and Hull

pleasure. The measure was introduced by Reps. John J. Lombardi, David A. Coughlin, Anastasia Williams, and Raymond A. Hull. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.

HB 7167 would expand family court jurisdiction to enter protective orders to provide for the safety and welfare of household pets in domestic abuse situations. It is also in the House Judiciary Committee.

Currently, 32 states plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have enacted Pet Protection Order statutes to add additional protection to all vulnerable family members in domestic violence situations and to remove a significant barrier that prevents many survivors from leaving abusive situations.

Five Shelters Share \$49,780 in Grants for Pet Safehousing

Thanks to a generous grant, RedRover in 2017 was able to increase up to \$20,000 its [Safe Housing grants](#) for capital construction to help domestic violence shelters build facilities to house pets ([See the December 2017 LINK-Letter](#)). The Sacramento-based organization has announced five recipients who are sharing more than \$49,000 in funding, enabling them to create on-site space to house pets. The latest shelters to receive Safe Housing grants are:

- Alternatives Inc. – Anderson, Ind. -- \$17,300
- Arising Hope – Eastlake, Colo. -- \$6,000
- HEAL, Inc., & The Nest – Ruidoso Downs, N. Mex. -- \$5,280
- Willow Domestic Violence Center – Rochester, N.Y. -- \$16,600
- Women's Resource Center to End Domestic Violence – Decatur, Ga. -- \$4,600



Since 2010, RedRover has awarded \$287,500 through its Safe Housing program, keeping thousands of families and pets together. As many as 70% of battered women with pets entering shelters have reported that their animals were killed, hurt or threatened for revenge or psychological control; up to 48% report they were unable to escape for fear of what would happen to their pets.

“RedRover is happy that we can expand this program,” said Nicole Forsyth, RedRover President & CEO. “It’s crucial that every domestic violence survivor has access to a pet-friendly shelter in their state. It can truly be a matter of life or death if they do not.”

Pet-friendly shelters are now present in 41 states. Shelters in Connecticut, Delaware, Hawai’i, Maine, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and West Virginia are especially encouraged to apply for grants in the next funding cycle, whose deadline is May 15.

ANIMAL ABUSE AND... CHILD PROTECTION

Ohio Bill Would Add Cross-Reporting Affecting Military and Civilian Families

A bill being proposed in the State of Ohio would establish sweeping requirements for cross-reporting various types of family violence within both civilian and military families. The cross-reporting measure, awaiting a bill number and to be introduced by Rep. Laura Lanese (R-23), is believed to be the first such bill in the U.S. to specifically also address cross-reporting procedures in military households.



Rep. Laura Lanese

The bill would amend several statutes to establish animal abuse reporting requirements; to modify the laws regulating counselors, social workers and marriage and family therapists; and to require that the Department of Defense Family Advocacy Program be notified when a person serving in the armed forces is being investigated for child abuse or neglect or domestic violence. The National Link Coalition was invited to help draft the proposed language of the bill.

The bill would require the following professionals to immediately report suspected abuse of a companion animal or horse:

- veterinarians and veterinary technicians;
- employees of children’s services agencies and county departments of job and family services with responsibility for protective services; and
- licensed counselors, social workers and marriage and family therapists.

Persons making such reports in good faith would be immune from civil and criminal liability.

Based upon the documented Link between animal and human abuse, the bill would also require dog wardens to report suspected family violence to an appropriate social services professional.

Cross-reporting provisions in Ohio are notoriously weak. Ohio law currently requires only humane society officials, but not dog wardens or animal control officers, to report suspected child abuse. There are no other cross-reporting provisions, nor is there universal mandated reporting of child or elder abuse as exists in numerous other states.

California “House of Horrors” Included Two Healthy, Well-Fed Dogs



In a departure from what is often seen in so-called “houses of horrors,” the Perris, Calif. parents accused of torturing and starving their 13 children also had two dogs who were healthy. [CBS News](#) reported that two Maltese-mix dogs were removed from the home of David and Louise Turpin by animal services and put up for adoption. A city spokesman said the dogs were leash-trained, well-fed and healthy. The Turpins have pleaded not guilty to multiple counts of child and dependent adult abuse, torture, false

imprisonment, and performing a lewd act on a child.

However, a former neighbor told [news media](#) that when the Turpins lived in Rio Vista, Texas, their trailer was “waist-deep in filth” with dead dogs and cats and a feces-covered living room. The neighbor said two Chihuahuas had survived by eating waste from soiled diapers.

ANIMAL ABUSE AND... ADULT PROTECTION

Indiana Bills Would Permit APS Staff to Cross-Report Animal Abuse

Two bills introduced in the Indiana General Assembly in January would permit adult protective services caseworkers to report suspected animal abuse with immunity from civil and criminal liability. **SB 332**, sponsored by Sen. Ronald Grooms (R-46), and companion measure **HB 1261**, sponsored by Rep. Michael Karickhoff (R-30), address “Pets in Distressed Homes.”



The bills provide that an adult protective services unit conducting an investigation, or a caseworker conducting an assessment, who observes or has reason to believe that an animal is a victim of animal cruelty, abandonment, or neglect may make a report to the local law enforcement agency or animal control officer. The bills further guarantee that the APS unit and caseworker would be immune from civil and criminal liability. If enacted, the measures would take effect July 1, 2018. **SB 332** is in the Senate Committee on Family and Children Services; **HB 1261** is in the House Judiciary Committee.

Indiana is one of nine states where all residents are mandated to report suspected abuse of endangered adults. Currently, APS personnel are mandated reporters of suspected animal abuse in Louisiana, Nebraska, Tennessee, and West Virginia; they are permitted to report animal abuse in California.

THE LINK AND... VETERINARY MEDICINE

Veterinary Publication Promotes National Directory

The National Link Coalition's National Directory of Abuse Investigation Agencies ([See the December 2017 LINK-Letter](#)), designed in part to help veterinarians who suspect animal cruelty, abuse and neglect or other forms of family violence but don't know how to report it, received a nice shout-out from *dvm360*, a newsletter that reaches thousands of practitioners with news they can use.



The [article in the Jan. 9 issue](#) described the Directory's county-by-county lists of over 6,500 humane, law enforcement, animal control, and other agencies that investigate allegations of animal maltreatment. Each state's listing also includes hotlines for reporting suspected child and elder abuse and crisis lines for victims of domestic violence.

The Directory was created in large part because 36 states and AVMA and AAHA policies now support veterinarians' reporting of suspected abuse, with immunity from civil and criminal liability, similar to long-standing provisions for physicians vis-à-vis human abuse. But the fragmented nature of animal abuse investigations, which are divided among an uncoordinated hodgepodge of local agencies from many different departments, has made the reporting process confusing and frustrating.

The article included hyperlinks to three related earlier *dvm360* articles: a [2011 article](#) about the ASPCA's recommendations on how veterinarians can help identify and report animal abuse seen in their practices; a [2007 article](#) about Patricia Feeser Norris' PetSafe program to care for the pets of domestic violence victims; and a [2015 article](#) about Martha Smith-Blackmore's study of canine injuries and deaths.

Other veterinary organizations that have publicized the National Directory include the One Health Initiative, Veterinary Social Work, and veterinary associations in Georgia and the District of Columbia.

Free Posters Remind Veterinarians to Report Suspected Abuse



Animal abuse victims depend on YOU.

If you see...

- Signs of neglect
severely matted fur, ingrown collar, severe dental disease, heavy ectoparasite infestation
- New, repeated, or old trauma
to the skeleton and soft tissue
- Injuries that don't match the explanation
keep non-accidental injuries on your list of rule-outs
- Starvation or severe malnutrition
- Repeated visits with different pets

...do the following:

- Ask:
"Do you think
someone may
have harmed
your pet?"
- Document
everything.
Take pictures.
- Contact
local law
enforcement.

Provided courtesy of the Animal Welfare Institute • www.awionline.org

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Provided courtesy of the Animal Welfare Institute • www.awionline.org

The Animal Welfare Institute has published two posters that remind veterinarians to watch for companion animal abuse. The posters list some of the most frequent signs of abuse and steps that practitioners can take to address such situations. The posters – one for dogs and one for cats – are free and can be downloaded from the [Animal Welfare Institute website](#).

BUILDING LINK AWARENESS

Canada Holds First Link Conference

On December 5th and 6th, professionals from all over Canada came together in Ottawa for the inaugural Canadian Violence Link Conference conducted by the [Canadian Federation of Humane Societies](#) (CFHS). Hayley Glaholt, Executive Director of [Link Toronto](#), shared this wrap-up of this historic conference with *The LINK-Letter*:



“This conference was both innovative and ground-breaking, uniting various sectors throughout the country with the goal of ending cycles of violence for humans and animals. This was the first time a national Canadian conference on ‘the Link’ had been organized, and judging by the enthusiasm of its participants, it was a much-needed and valued event. Attendees included police, crown prosecutors, animal advocates, veterinarians, political representatives, academics, and women’s advocates. Regionally, British Columbia, New Brunswick, and Ottawa were well represented.

“Dr. Frank Ascione gave the plenary address, providing a fascinating overview of the evolution of academic research on ‘the Link.’ Of particular interest was his focus on children—specifically, the ways in which seeing or hearing animal abuse in the home can affect a child’s development and propensity to later commit violent acts.



“Conference sessions were varied and engaging. Topics included: ‘Investigation and Prosecution of Animal Abuse and Neglect 101,’ ‘Is There More than Meets the Eye? Seeing Signs of Child Abuse When Looking at Animal Welfare,’ ‘Cross-Sector Collaboration to Better Address High-Risk Interpersonal Violence and Animal Cruelty,’ and ‘Beyond Awareness: Tools for Supporting Sexual Assault Survivors.’

“Dr. Amy Fitzgerald, Associate Professor of Criminology at the University of Windsor and a member of the University’s Animal and Interpersonal Abuse Research Group, gave an informative plenary address on recent and ongoing Link research she has conducted throughout the country. Of great significance were statistics regarding domestic violence shelters and pet ownership in Canada. Canada-specific numbers are quite difficult to find, and Dr. Fitzgerald’s work is extremely useful for Canadian Link professionals seeking to change policy and apply for funding. We found one of her observations to be particularly surprising: of 337 domestic violence shelters in Canada with publicly accessible websites,



only 155 (46%) mention pets, and 70% did not mention any options for off-site pet services. She recommended that all shelter websites: a) acknowledge that pet ownership is a significant factor in determining if survivors will leave their abuser; and b) offer suggestions for safety-planning and finding safe care for pets while survivors are at shelters.



“An additional highlight of the conference was Dr. Margaret Doyle’s presentation entitled ‘Increasing Veterinary Recognition and Reporting of Animal Crimes.’ It was eye-opening to learn that many veterinarians do not and will not report animal abuse, even if they are mandated to do so. Dr. Doyle, who is part of Horizon Veterinary Group in Calgary, Alberta, discussed the reasons behind vets’ unwillingness to report (liability, financial concerns, uncertainty of process, not wanting to be the ‘bad guy,’ etc.), and provided information as to how vets (and related professionals) may resolve these

concerns. As one of Canada’s only forensic veterinarians, Dr. Doyle brought cutting-edge information to her presentation, and she made a clear case for why more training in forensics and procedure is vital when addressing human and animal violence.

“Throughout the conference, organizers maintained a focus on practical steps that could be taken to end cycles of violence in participants’ home communities. This focus was brought to the forefront in the final session, entitled ‘Catalyzing Action: From Problems to Solutions.’ Attendees were encouraged to make concrete plans as to how they were going to put knowledge into action, and to both harness and maintain the momentum they had gained throughout the conference. Link Coalition Toronto was grateful to network with so many inspiring and driven individuals from all over the country, and we came home with numerous plans to extend our Coalition in Toronto.

“Overall, the 2017 CFHS Canadian Violence Link Conference was a resounding success! The Canadian Federation of Humane Societies mentioned that they would consider holding the event annually or bi-annually, which was enthusiastically supported by all in attendance. It would have been encouraging to see more diversity (economic, cultural/ethnic, and gender) among participants, however, and we were cognizant of the fact that Link professionals must continually reach out to include and engage individuals from all areas of Canadian society. Violence leaves no population of the country untouched, and cycles of violence cannot be interrupted unless all voices and perspectives are included in creating and implementing solutions.”



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Planting Seeds Brings Results

Within only a few weeks of the Canadian Link Conference, law enforcement and humane officials already started seeing their work bear fruit. Barbara Cartwright, CEO of the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies, shared this account:

“On New Year’s Day, two police officers in a major Canadian city responded to a call that an animal had been stabbed. The officers determined the animal urgently needed treatment and transported the puppy to a nearby veterinary hospital. Thanks to the expert training they received at the CFHS Canadian Violence Link Conference in December, they made the connection that a person in the home might be a victim of domestic violence. The officers investigated further and formed reasonable grounds that partner abuse had occurred. A suspect was subsequently charged with numerous Criminal Code offences – including two animal cruelty charges.

“We cannot name the police force or the location since the charges are pending before a court. However, in part due to the knowledge gained from the Canadian Violence Link Conference, the living beings (animal and human) in this instance were spared further abuse, and perhaps a human life was saved.

“The outcome of this case might have been very different if CFHS had not held this conference. If the police in this case had not looked at the family, including this puppy, holistically, the animal could have been brought back into the abusive environment. This time, it was a case of animal abuse, which helped the puppy’s human companion receive the help they needed. Next time, it could be the animal who is saved through the intervention of a social worker, police officer or educator.”

NEWS FROM OTHER LINK COALITIONS

Link Toronto Initiates SafePet Program

Domestic violence survivors and their pets in Canada’s largest metropolitan area now have a safe place to go with the Dec. 1 launch of Link Toronto’s [SafePet](#) program. The Toronto coalition has partnered with Interval House to provide foster care for the animal victims of intimate partner violence. Link Toronto notes that it plans to add additional shelters in the greater Toronto area soon.



Through the program, foster families provide pets with food, shelter and exercise while women who are at risk of abuse stay at a participating shelter. Safe Pet veterinarians assist by serving as a neutral location where the woman can drop her pet off before entering the shelter. The veterinarian then completes a health exam and administers any necessary vaccinations for the animal. Identities of the woman and the foster family are kept strictly confidential for the security and well-being of all concerned. Program planners anticipate most pets will be fostered for 8 – 12 months. When the woman is ready to leave the shelter, she is reunited with her pets at the veterinarian’s office.

Link Toronto is part of the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association’s SafePet Network.

THE LINK... IN THE LEGISLATURES

Victories We're Celebrating... and Bills We're Watching

As the 2018 legislative season opens, we are finding that more and more state legislators are recognizing that animal abuse and interpersonal violence are LINKed. We are encouraged by this progress and hope to see even more LINK legislation passed this year!

Domestic Violence/Pet Protection Orders



H.R. 909 and S.322 – the Pet And Women Safety (PAWS) Act – was re-introduced and now has 245 bi-partisan co-sponsors in the House and 36 in the Senate. The PAWS Act would prohibit threats or acts of violence against a victim's pet in interstate stalking and interstate violation of protection orders. It would allocate \$3 million annually through 2021 in grants for shelter and housing assistance for victims with pets, support services to help victims secure safe housing that allows pets, and for pet-related services. Grants could also be used for training on The Link and for identifying best practices. Abusers would be required to make restitution to the victim for costs incurred for veterinary services. **H.R. 909** is in the House Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security and Investigations. **S.322** is in the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry.



Colorado SB 18-060 would specifically allow courts to specifically issue a protective order prohibiting the taking, transferring, concealing, harming, disposing of, or threatening to harm an animal owned, possessed, leased, kept, or held by the alleged victim or witness. Colorado law currently includes animals among the various types of property that can be included in a protective order. The bill was approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee.



Michigan HB 4026 would define "causing or attempting to cause physical harm" to a family member's animal as an act of domestic violence in addition to any animal cruelty charges that might pertain. It would allow domestic violence shelters that accept animals to receive state funding and to include veterinary care among the emergency health care services that they provide among the criteria for needing funding. The bill is in the Committee on Law and Justice.



Michigan HB 4332 would make it a 1st, 2nd or 3rd-degree offense, depending on severity, to knowingly torture or kill an animal with the intent to cause mental distress or exert control over a person. The bill passed the House on Nov. 29 by a vote of 90-15 and was sent to the Senate Judiciary Committee.



Mississippi SB 2232 would authorize courts to include the protection of pets in the order and require that the respondent not remove, damage, hide, harm or dispose of any companion animal owned by the person protected by the order. The court could also authorize the removal of a companion animal from the possession of the respondent. If enacted, the law would take effect on July 1, 2018. The bill is in the senate Judiciary Committee.



New Mexico HJM 3 would request that the Department of Children, Youth and Families and the Department of Public Safety consider providing training on the Link between animal abuse and family violence in training delivered to appropriate personnel.



New York A8663 would amend §23 of the state's Domestic Relations Law to require the court to consider the best interest of a companion animal when awarding possession in a divorce or separation proceeding. The bill is in the Assembly Judiciary Committee.



Ohio HB1 would expand the ability of courts to issue protection-from-abuse orders that include the animals of domestic violence survivors to individuals seeking protection orders in cases of dating violence. It would allow a court order of protection to require that a respondent not remove, damage, hide, harm, or dispose of any companion animal owned or possessed by the petitioner alleging dating violence. It also would allow a court order to authorize the petitioner, alleging dating violence, to remove a companion animal owned by that petitioner from the possession of the respondent. The bill has passed the House and is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.



Pennsylvania HB1652 would allow divorcing parties to enter into a custody agreement for the possession and/or care of a companion animal. Such agreements may specify the time during which each party will possess the pet and each party's financial responsibility regarding its care. The bill defines relevant factors which the court may consider. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.



Rhode Island H7032 would permit the family court to award custody of household pets to the plaintiff in a domestic abuse complaint. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.



Rhode Island HB 7167 would expand family court jurisdiction to enter protective orders to provide for the safety and welfare of household pets in domestic abuse situations. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.

Animal Sexual Abuse



H.R. 1494/S.654 -- the PACT (Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture) Act – would amend and update 18 U.S. Code § 48 to expand the definition of “animal crushing,” as pertains to “crush videos,” to include any act in which animals are subjected to serious bodily injury or conduct that, if committed against a person, would be defined as sexual abuse or aggravated sexual abuse. The Senate version passed unanimously on Dec. 14 and heads to the Judiciary Committee in the House, where it has 269 co-sponsors.



Existing **Alabama** law prohibits the dissemination, display and possession of obscene material including child pornography and bestiality. **SB 35** would clarify the definition of dissemination by removing the requirement of monetary consideration and would add sharing or trading such visual depictions. The bill is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.



Hawai'i SB 2289 would create a new crime of sexual assault of an animal as a Class C felony, or a Class B felony if committed in the presence of a minor, and order forfeiture of all animals; prohibit living, working or volunteering with animals for five years; and require psychological or psychiatric counseling or treatment. The bill is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.



Maryland HB 1134 and **SB 800** would replace the more archaic terms “sodomy,” “bestiality” and “unnatural or perverted sexual practices” with the more contemporary “sexual activity with an animal” and prohibit a wide range of activities designed to promote, coerce, observe, or abet such practices. Convicted offenders would be barred from owning, residing with, or coming into contact with an animal for 30 years. The law would take effect Oct. 1, 2018. The bills are in the respective Judiciary committees.



Massachusetts S.805 would amend Mass. Gen. Laws Ann. Ch. 272, § 34, which currently uses the archaic language prohibiting “the abominable and detestable crime against nature either with mankind or with any animal,” to prohibit “a sexual act on an animal, uses an object to sexually abuse an animal, or knowingly permits a sexual act with an animal on any premises under such person’s control.” The bill is in the Joint Committee on the Judiciary.



Washington SB 6076 would change the definition of illegal animal sexual contact to include sexual penetration or touching of the sexual or other intimate parts of an animal by force, intimidation, coercion, or where motivated by sexual arousal, sexual gratification or financial gain.



Wisconsin AB 666 would update the state’s archaic bestiality law and make it a felony to have sexual contact with an animal, to coerce another to have sexual contact with an animal, or to promote, advertise, harbor, transport, or obtain an animal for the purpose of sexual contact. Current law only makes sexual gratification with an animal a misdemeanor and does not include the other provisions. The bill would also create escalating degrees of felony if the other person is a child. The bill was approved by the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety.

Animal Abuse and Child Maltreatment



Michigan HB 4025 would increase the penalties for animal abuse committed in the presence of a child to a misdemeanor punishable by up to one year’s imprisonment, \$2,000 fine, and 300 hours of community service. The bill is in the Committee on Law and Justice.



New York S1432 and **A5048** criminalize knowingly causing a minor to attend a place where exhibition of animal fighting is being conducted. **S1432** passed the Senate and both bills are now in the Assembly Agriculture Committee.



New York S2470 and companion bill **A2140**, and **S728** and companion bill **A3845**, would increase penalties for aggravated animal cruelty committed in the presence of a child. **S2470** is in the Senate Agriculture Committee; **A2140** is in the Assembly Codes Committee. **S728** passed the Senate and joined **A3845** in the Assembly Agriculture Committee.

Animal Hoarding



Florida SB 86 would define animal hoarding as keeping a large number of companion animals in overcrowded conditions; failing to provide them with minimal standards of nutrition, sanitation, shelter and medical care; and failure to acknowledge these conditions and the impact on the well-being of the animals or persons.



New York A44 would create the crime of companion animal hoarding, defined as ownership, possession or custody of more than 25 companion animals living in conditions likely to jeopardize the health and well-being of the animals and/or people. Offenders would be required to undergo mental health evaluation and may be required to undergo counseling and be prohibited from owning animals. The bill is in the Agriculture Committee.

Psychological Evaluation of Offenders



Mississippi SB 2172 would allow a court to order persons convicted of aggravated cruelty to receive a psychiatric or psychological examination and counseling or treatment. The bill would also expand the definition of aggravated animal cruelty. The bill is in the Senate Agriculture and Judiciary Committees.



Existing **Virginia** law permits courts to impose anger management or other appropriate treatment programs, or obtain psychiatric or psychological counseling, upon animal cruelty offenders. **HB 425** would make such provisions mandatory unless the court finds that the person presents no current or future likelihood of repeating the violation or causing harm to himself or others.

Animal Abuse and Other Crimes



California AB 197 would add animal abuse, child abuse, elder and dependent adult abuse, and other crimes as “violent” felonies that could be prosecuted as a 3rd strike with additional years of imprisonment under the Three Strikes Law. The bill is in the Committee on Public Safety.



Hawai'i SB 2014 would create a registry of convicted animal cruelty offenders based upon the premise that “acts of cruelty to one animal has been linked to cruelty to other animals and violence against humans, it is necessary to ensure that persons convicted of cruelty to animals are restricted from interacting with animals.” The bill is in the Senate Judiciary and Ways & Means Committees.



Massachusetts S.1159 would add the crimes of animal cruelty and fighting as specifically enumerated offenses which would allow the prosecution to ask for pre-trial detention on the grounds of the defendant’s dangerousness. The bill would also mandate *Cross-Training*. The bill was approved by the Committee on Municipal and Regional Government and sent to the Senate Rules Committee.



New York S1680 and companion bill **A3038** would expand the definition of aggravated cruelty to animals to include harm to animals during the commission of a felony. **S1680** passed the Senate on Jan. 30 and was referred to the Assembly Agriculture Committee; **A3038** is in the Codes Committee.



New York S251 would expand animal fighting prohibitions to criminalize promoting, attending, facilitating, training, breeding or selling fighting animals, or selling, manufacturing or owning animal fighting paraphernalia. The bill is in the Agriculture Committee.

Cross-Reporting



Indiana SB 332 and companion bill **HB 1261** (“Protecting pets in distressed homes”) would require Adult Protective Services employees conducting assessments or investigations who have reason to believe an animal is a victim of cruelty, abandonment or neglect may make a report to a law enforcement or animal control agency, with immunity from civil and criminal liability. **SB 332** is in the Senate Family & Children Services Committee and **HB 1261** is in the House Judiciary Committee.



Massachusetts S.295 in the Education Committee would make domestic violence workers, animal control officers and humane officers mandated reporters of child sexual abuse.



Massachusetts S.1159 would require employees or contractors of the Department of Children & Families, Department of Elder Affairs investigators, and Disabled Persons Protection Commission investigators to report suspected animal abuse. The bill would add animal control officers as mandatory reporters of child abuse, elder abuse and abuse against disabled persons. The bill would also affect *Animal Abuse and Other Crimes*. The bill was approved by the Committee on Municipal and Regional Government and sent to the Senate Rules Committee.



Michigan HB 4441 would amend the Child Protection Law to add animal control officers as mandated reporters of suspected child abuse or child neglect. **HB 4442** would amend the Michigan Penal Code to require Child Protective Services employees to report suspected animal abuse or neglect to an animal control or law enforcement officer, with anonymity, the presumption of having acted in good faith, and immunity from civil or criminal liability. Failure to report, or making a false report, would be punishable offenses. **HB 4443** would amend the Code of Criminal Procedure to make intentional false reporting of animal abuse a felony. The bills are in the Judiciary Committee.



Minnesota veterinarians are mandated to report suspected animal cruelty, abuse and neglect to peace officers, humane agents or animal control officers. **HF 787** and **SF1167** would give them immunity from civil liability. **HF 787** is in the Agriculture Policy Committee and **SF1167** is in the Agriculture, Rural Development & Housing Policy Committee.



Mississippi SB 2172 would require law enforcement officers investigating animal abuse cases to utilize a uniform form designed by the Mississippi Bureau of Investigation that complies with the FBI's National Incident Based Reporting System. The bill would also enhance penalties for animal cruelty and require youths convicted of aggravated cruelty to a dog or cat to undergo psychiatric or psychological evaluation.



New York S621 and **A4904** would require veterinarians to report suspected animal cruelty to police, SPCAs, peace officers, district attorney's offices, animal control officers, the department of agriculture and markets, or other appropriate agencies and to turn over necessary records. New York veterinarians are currently permitted but are not required to report. The bills, sponsored by Sen. Phil Boyle and Assemblywoman Linda Rosenthal, are in the respective Higher Education Committees.



Ohio HB147 would add agents of the Ohio Humane Society to professionals mandated to report child abuse. It also would repeal a provision of the Humane Society Law that specifically requires humane society agents to remove a child from his or her parents when the agent deems it to be in the child's best interest. Current law designates agents of county humane societies as mandated reporters, but not agents of the Ohio Humane Society. Current law also requires public children's services agencies to prepare a memorandum of understanding to be signed by specified law enforcement and judicial officers in their jurisdiction, including the county humane society; the bill would allow the Ohio Humane Society to be a signatory as well. The bill is in the Civil Justice Committee.



Pennsylvania SB 176 would add animal control and humane society police officers as mandated reporters of child abuse, and social services employees to report animal cruelty. The bill is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

THE LINK... IN THE NEWS

Two Accused of Killing 20 Chickens with their Bare Hands on Christmas



Gregory Ulrich (left) & John Budnovitch

Two men from Milford, Conn., were charged with animal cruelty, larceny, criminal mischief, and conspiracy after police alleged they smashed several car windows on Christmas Day and then proceeded to steal 20 chickens and kill them with their bare hands. The [Hartford Courant](#) reported that Gregory Ulrich, 28, and John Budnovitch IV, 21, were each charged with 20 counts of animal cruelty plus the other charges. Police said the arrests came after what was called a “gruesome animal cruelty investigation.”

Man Pleads Guilty to Animal Cruelty and Hiding His Girlfriend’s Body



Dayshaun Keith Kent

A Roanoke, Va. man is scheduled to be sentenced on April 10 after pleading guilty to charges of felony animal cruelty and improper disposal of a human body for hiding the body of his missing girlfriend and killing her two cats. Dayshaun Keith Kent, 23, took the plea bargain on Jan. 3 in Roanoke Circuit Court. [The Roanoke Times](#) reported that his live-in girlfriend, Edme Merle-Perez, 38, was reported missing last March; her skeletal remains were later found buried in a wooded area near their home, although the cause of death could not be determined. Several days after her disappearance, her credit cards were used in local stores and security camera footage tied Kent to those purchases. Two weeks later, fishermen found a backpack containing the bodies of the two cats. A police detective told the judge that Kent admitted putting them in the bag alive and throwing them in the river. As a result of the plea agreement, credit card fraud charges were dropped and Kent faces up to five years in prison on each of the three other charges.

Bully-Breed Seller Faces 33 Counts of Cruelty Plus Drug and Weapons Charges



Daniel Pride

A breeder and seller of “bully-breed” dogs was charged on Jan. 3 with 33 counts of felony animal cruelty and four firearms and drug charges after police reportedly found more than two dozen injured and malnourished pit bull dogs and puppies, three of which were dead, inside a building with little heat and a floor that was covered in blood. [Fox-46](#) reported that Daniel Pride, 37, of Hickory, N. Car., started renting the building on New Year’s Day because he wasn’t allowed to keep the dogs at his house. Pride, a convicted felon, was being held on \$103,000 bond.



Gloria Carmona

Home Health Aide Charged in Kicking Patient’s Dog to Death

A home health aide has been charged with aggravated animal cruelty after allegedly kicking to death a small dog that belonged to the patient she was caring for. Police said that Gloria Carmona, 28, of Troy, N.Y. was reported by another health aide who worked in the home. The [Albany Times-Union](#) reported that the dog was taken to a local veterinary clinic and had to be euthanized due to the severity of its injuries.

Drug Offender Gets Near-Maximum Sentence in Cruelty Case After Arguing with Girlfriend

A Mansfield, Ohio man received nearly a maximum prison sentence for slashing the throats of three puppies and breaking the leg of a fourth after a fight with his girlfriend. Richland County Common Pleas Judge Brent Robinson sentenced Christopher Vandenberg, 38, who had pled no contest, to three years and eight months on four felony counts, out of a possible maximum prison term of four years. In imposing the sentence, the judge said Vandenberg's offenses were comparable to injuring children or the elderly. "There really is no difference than harming the most vulnerable members of society," the [Mansfield News-Journal](#) reported Robinson saying. The judge also ordered Vandenberg to pay \$2,303 in restitution to the Humane Society of Richland County for the care of the pit bull mixes, all of which have recovered and been adopted. Investigators learned that Vandenberg also had a history of drug convictions, burglary and probation violations, and had been cited three times in prison for having homemade alcohol.



Christopher Vandenberg

LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Feb. 15 – (Online): Allie Phillips will lead a [webinar](#) for the Institute for Human-Animal Connection on "Linked-Informed Response: Changing Agency Procedures" about how human and animal welfare agencies, prosecutors, law enforcement, and allied professionals are changing their policies and procedures. LINK-Letter readers can use the code CHANGE for one-time free access.

Feb. 24 (online): [Allie Phillips](#) will conduct a webinar for the University of Leicester (UK) Student Animal Legal Defense Fund chapter about co-sheltering people and pets of domestic violence.

Feb. 19 – Seattle, Wash.: Randy Lockwood, Rachel Touroo and other ASPCA staff will present a day-long workshop on "A Multidisciplinary Approach to Dogfighting Cases" at the [American Academy of Forensic Sciences](#) Annual Scientific Meeting.

Feb. 28 – West Palm Beach, Fla.: The [South Florida Link Coalition](#) will meet.

March 3 – Indianapolis, Ind.: Martha Smith-Blackmore will speak on "Crimes of Omission," "Crimes of Perversion," and "Veterinary CSI" at the [Indiana Veterinary Medical Association's](#) 134th Annual Conference.

March 7 – Pittsfield, Mass.: The [HAVEN](#) (Human/Animal Violence Education Network) Network will meet at the Berkshire Humane Society.

March 9 – Dallas, Texas: Phil Arkow will speak at the [North Texas Link Coalition's](#) CEU Conference.

March 13 – London, U.K.: [The Links Group UK](#) will meet at Dogs Trust.

March 13-17 – Knoxville, Tenn.: Maya Gupta and Jenny Edwards will be among the presenters discussing The Link between Violence to Humans and Animals at the [Veterinary Social Work Intensive](#).

March 20 (online): Melinda Merck will conduct a [webinar](#) on using Veterinary Forensics to Support Investigation and Prosecution efforts for the Justice Clearinghouse.

March 23 – Cranford, N.J.: Phil Arkow will train staff of the [N.J. Division of Child Protection & Permanency](#) on “Animal Abuse and Dangerous Animals as Risk Factors for Child Abuse and Other Family Violence.”

April 4 – Philadelphia, Pa.: Phil Arkow will speak to the Animals and Social Work class at the University of Pennsylvania [School of Social Policy & Practice](#).

April 18 (online): Phil Arkow will conduct a webinar on “Domestic Violence and the Human-Animal Bond” for [Pet Partners](#).

April 23 – Charlotte, N. Car.: Phil Arkow will present a Link training to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department [Animal Care & Control](#) Division.

April 26-18 – Austin, Texas: Phil Arkow will present “Who ‘Ya Gonna Call? Abuse Busters!” at the 10th Annual [Texas Unites for Animals](#) conference.

May 9 (online): Phil Arkow will conduct a webinar on “Animal Abuse and Interpersonal Violence” for the [National Organization for Victim Assistance Academy](#).

May 11 – Richmond, Va.: Phil Arkow will present on “Species-Spanning Medicine: The Link between Animal Abuse and Other Forms of Family Violence” at the Virginia Commonwealth University [Department of Psychiatry](#)’s Grand Rounds.

May 30 – (online): Allie Phillips will present a webinar on Sheltering Animals and Families Together (SAFT) for the [National Network to End Domestic Violence](#).

June 5 – Bloomington, Ill.: Phil Arkow will present at the [Prairie States Animal Welfare Conference](#).

July 6 – Vancouver, B.C., Canada: Phil Arkow will present on The Link, Clinical and Diagnostic Indicators of Animal Abuse, and Addressing Practice Management Concerns in Responding to Suspected Abuse at the [Canadian Veterinary Medical Association](#) Convention.

Aug. 9 – Aurora, Colo.: Phil Arkow will speak to the [Metro Denver Animal Welfare Alliance](#) about The Link.

Sept. 6 – Buffalo, N.Y.: Phil Arkow will present at the [Buffalo Academy of Veterinary Medicine](#)’s lecture series.

Oct. 22-23 – Oklahoma City, Okla.: The Kirkpatrick Foundation will sponsor the [Oklahoma Animal Conference](#) as part of its Safe & Humane initiative.

Nov. 23 – Calgary, Alberta, Canada: Phil Arkow will speak at the [Alberta Veterinary Medical Association](#)’s Veterinary Forensics Workshop.



ABOUT THE NATIONAL LINK COALITION



The National Link Coalition is an informal, multi-disciplinary collaborative network of individuals and organizations in human services and animal welfare who address the intersections between animal abuse, domestic violence, child maltreatment and elder abuse through research, public policy, programming and community awareness. We believe that human and animal well-being are inextricably intertwined and that the prevention of family and community violence can best be achieved through partnerships representing multi-species perspectives.

Members of the National Link Coalition Steering Committee

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Chair, Animal Abuse & Family Violence Prevention Project,
The Latham Foundation
Stratford, N.J.

Lesley Ashworth

Founder/President, American Veterinary Charitable Fund
Consultant, Ohio Domestic Violence Network
Former Director, Domestic Violence/Stalking Program,
Columbus City Attorney's Office/Prosecution Division
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